

Retirement Frequently Asked Questions for Eligible Family Members

The Office of Retirement

1. I am in a Foreign Service pay plan but my retirement system is FERS, is this correct?

- a. Yes, although you are assigned to an overseas post, EFM's serving on an FMA participate in the FERS retirement system which applies to civil service employees. This is a different retirement system than the Foreign Service Pension System (FSPS).

2. I have part-time and intermittent service (PIT) service, is this creditable?

- a. PIT service is only creditable if you applied during the special enrollment period in 2008. If you had PIT service from January 1, 1989 to May 24, 1998, you could have made a special deposit. This is no longer an option for employees.

3. When am I eligible to retire under FERS?

- a. Minimum Retirement Age (MRA) with 30 years of service
b. 60 years of age with 20 years of service
c. MRA with 10 years of service (age penalty)
d. 62 years of age with 5 years of service

4. What is the Minimum Retirement Age?

a.

Birth Year	MRA (Age)
Before 1948	55
1948	55 and 2 months
1949	55 and 4 months
1950	55 and 6 months
1951	55 and 8 months
1952	55 and 10 months
1953-1964	56
1965	56 and 2 months
1966	56 and 4 months
1967	56 and 6 months
1968	56 and 8 months
1969	56 and 10 months
1970	57

5. What is the age penalty?

- a. There is a 5% age penalty for each year under the age of 62 if you retire with less than 30 years of service but more than 10 years of service.

6. What is the vesting requirement?

- a. You must have at least 5 years of civilian service to qualify for an annuity benefit.

7. What is the process to get a retirement estimate?

- a. Contact HRSC@state.gov. Let them know that you are an EFM and you would like a retirement estimate. EBIS does not provide an accurate annuity benefit for employees with part-time and/or intermittent service.

8. Do I receive retirement credit if I am reassigned to an intermittent appointment?

- a. You will only receive retirement credit if you worked during that period. Any periods of intermittent service in which you did not work is not creditable service for retirement purposes. Retirement credit is not given for times spent in Intermittent- Non-Work Status (INWS) when in between posts. Additionally, credit is not given for time enrolled in the Family Member Reserve Corps while in a non-pay status.

9. I had some temporary or refunded service, can I purchase this service?

- a. If you have temporary service prior to 1/1/1989, you will be able to make a deposit for retirement credit. Temporary service after 12/31/1988 is not creditable for retirement purposes.
- b. For refunded service, you must redeposit the refund you received plus interest.

10. How do I make this purchase for my temporary or refunded service?

- a. Please complete the SF 3108, Application for Service Credit. Complete the first page and submit the form to HRSC@state.gov.

11. Am I assigned a retirement counselor?

- a. Yes, each employee is assigned to a retirement counselor. Counselors are assigned portfolios based on the employee's last name. The list of counselors and their portfolios can be found on the HR Portal under Offices/Retirement.

12. How can I get an appointment with a counselor?

- a. You can request an appointment through HRSC@state.gov

13. How does a part-time work schedule affect my retirement benefits?

- a. For retirement eligibility, working part-time is the same as working full-time. However, the annuity benefits will be computed using a proration factor. The factor is determined by using the total number of hours you worked on a part-time basis over the total number of hours that you could have worked on a full-time basis.

14. What happens to my unused annual leave if I separate from the agency?

- a. You will receive a lump sum payment within 12 to 14 weeks after separation. It is an automatic payout.

15. Does my sick leave count towards retirement?

- a. Yes, your sick leave balance is added to your years of service; however, it cannot be used to meet the eligibility for retirement requirement.

16. What is the difference between a resignation and retirement?

- a. When an employee resigns, he or she does not meet the age and service requirements for retirement at the time of separation. Employees establish eligibility for an annuity at age 62 with at least 5 years of service.
- b. When an employee retires, he or she does meet the age and service requirements for retirement at the time of separation.

17. If I do not meet the eligibility requirements for retirement at the time of separation, what happens?

Depending on your length of service, you may have options:

- a. You can elect to receive a refund of retirement contributions. Election to receive a refund of retirement contributions will forfeit any entitlements to a future annuity benefit.
- b. You may be eligible for an annuity benefit at age 62 if you have at least 5 years of civilian service. If you have at least 10 years of service, you could receive a benefit at your MRA with an age penalty.
- c. In either case, health and life insurance coverage will terminate without possible reenrollment.

18. How will the annuity be calculated?

- a. You will receive 1% for each year of service multiplied by your average high three salary.

19. How do I apply for retirement?

- a. You can initiate the process through EBIS. EBIS is a self-service tool on HR Online. You can click on the e-retirement tab and answer a series of questions. Once you have completed each section, you will hit the “submit” button twice.
- b. If you wish to apply for a deferred retirement when you are no longer working for the Department of State, you can complete and return the RI 92-19, Application for Deferred Annuity and send to the Office of Personnel Management.

20. Is there a difference between FERS, FERS RAE or FERS FRAE?

- a. The annuity is calculated the same; however, the amount that each employee contributes to the retirement system is different.
 - i. FERS – contributes 0.8%
 - ii. FERS RAE – contributes 3.1%
 - iii. FERS FRAE – contributes 4.4%

21. I am a part-time employee but have weeks where I work full time. Will these full time periods of employment be credited for retirement purposes?

- a. Retirement credit is based on paid employment. If you are working in excess of your part-time schedule whether or not you increase your retirement credit will depend on how you are being compensated for your work. If you receive overtime compensation, you will accrue additional retirement credit up to a regular full time schedule. If however, you receive comp time, you will not accrue additional retirement credit.
- b. In order to ensure credit for extra retirement hours, you must provide a copy your earnings and leave statement for each pay period that you work those additional hours. Otherwise, we will only use the hours documented on the personnel action, which will not reflect the additional earnings.

22. If I separate from service before I am eligible for an annuity do I have to withdraw my Retirement Contributions?

- a. No.
- b. You do have the option to elect a refund of your contributions. However, a refund would forfeit any entitlement that you have towards receiving an annuity.
- c. If you withdraw those funds but later return to the government, you must repay the refund plus interest on those funds in order to receive credit for those prior years of service.

23. How much is my annuity reduced to provide a survivor benefit?

- a. If you elect the maximum survivor benefit which is 50% of your annuity, your annuity would be reduced by 10%. For example, unreduced monthly annuity of \$2,000 would be reduced to \$1,800 (10% of \$2,000). Upon your death, your spouse would receive \$1,000.
- b. If you elect the minimum survivor benefit which is 25% of your annuity, your annuity would be reduced by 5%. For example, unreduced monthly annuity of \$2,000 would be reduced to \$1,900 (5% of \$2,000). Upon your death, your spouse would receive \$500.

24. Do I have to elect a survivor benefit for my spouse?

- a. As an active employee, your spouse is automatically entitled to receive the maximum survivor benefits unless he/she consent to a lesser amount. The consent must be notarized.
- b. If you do not elect a survivor benefit and you are the owner of the health insurance policy, your coverage will be terminated if there is no survivor benefit payable.

25. What should I be looking for upon entry into Federal service?

- a. You should review your personnel action to verify if they have you in the correct retirement system.
- b. If you previously had at least 5 years of civilian service, you want to make sure that you are contributing the correct amount into the retirement fund.
- c. If you are not sure, please consult with your bureau or Human Resource Officer at post.

26. What is the timeframe for processing retirement cases?

- a. You must apply for retirement at least 90 days prior to separation.
- b. If you apply in less than 90 days, we cannot guarantee that you will receive your first payment on time.

27. How long before I receive my first payment from OPM?

- a. You should receive a payment from OPM within 6 to 8 weeks after separation provided you submitted your application within 90 days of separation.

28. How do I apply for retirement if I do not have access to EBIS?

- a. You should contact your retirement counselor through HRSC@state.gov. Your retirement counselor can send a retirement package to your correspondence address. You will mail the retirement package back to the address that is provided. OPM only accepts documents with original signatures; therefore retirement package cannot be emailed or faxed.

29. What about the Thrift Savings Plan? Is that in addition to my FERS pension?

- a. Yes, each pay period you contribute to both your FERS pension and if you have elected to do so, you also contribute to the TSP.
- b. You can see how much you are contributing to the TSP from your earnings and leave statement and can adjust the amount through Employee Express. Keep in mind that agency matches up to 5%.

- c. You can get more information about TSP from their website, and can also learn about the various funds your money is invested in and reallocate the investments through TSP.

30. When am I eligible to withdraw funds from the TSP?

- a. You can withdraw from your TSP account within 45 days of separation. Go to tsp.gov for more information about withdrawal of funds.

31. When can I receive my TSP funds if I separate?

- a. You can request a withdrawal of funds 45 days after separation.

32. If I separate from service, do I have to withdraw my TSP contribution?

- a. No, you can keep the money in your TSP account and it will continue to accrue earnings.
- b. Should you wish to withdraw the money you will be subject to taxes upon withdrawal in addition to an IRS 10% early withdrawal penalty if you request a refund prior to age 59 ½ .